

The Cost of Following Jesus!

Matthew 8: 18-22 NLT

"¹⁸ When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he instructed his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ Then one of the teachers of religious law said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰ But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head." ²¹ Another of his disciples said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father." ²² But Jesus told him, "Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead."

Many of us today, might say that we count the cost of everything, perhaps a little more closely than in the past, since everything is costing so much more, but truth be known, many don't. We are living in a time when people want what they want, and it doesn't matter what the cost is, within reason. However, there are some things we need to pay attention to when purchasing things today. Not necessarily out loud, or in a formal manor, but we do count them. Often it is to make sure that no one else takes what we want, prior to our obtaining them for ourselves. The cost varies and includes many things that are not monetary.

For instance -

(1) When you place your child in a sport, basketball, football, baseball, soccer or some other sport. We recognize that he or she will have to commit to practice, time for the games, and so on. It is a part of the cost of playing any organized sport. It's not just about your child, but the parents as well. Transporting them, picking them up and everything else.

(2) Or, how about seeking a NEW, or, SPECIFIC job? We may, clean the car, iron the shirt or slacks, think about what we should say, filling out our resume with the best possible information, whatever we need to do to obtain the best job out there, or so it used to be. Truth be known, we might even stretch the information on our resume just a little, to make ourselves sound a little better than we actually are. You know what I mean. Why? In our minds, we consider it as part of the cost of getting ahead in a challenging world.

(3) What about climbing the latter of social success? We join a certain club, eat at certain restaurants, drive certain vehicles, often vehicles we, cannot really afford. Even hang out with the right kind of political figures. Why? That is the cost of looking like you are on the right side of the tracks. Living the right way, Right?

It is amazing to me, the price some people are willingly to pay, to get what they think they must have, or, want to pursue. I have to believe, this is why so many individuals, couples or families, are struggling so much. We have set our sights on thing which have little or no value in life. We're willing to pay the price, but are we paying to much for all the wrong things.

So, since we are considering the cost of everything in life, what does our Lord tell us about the cost of following Him? Let's look at this passage:

First - The speedy commitment

“When Jesus saw the crowd around Him, He gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.” (vv.18-20)

The teacher of the law was ready to commit to Christ, perhaps even excited to do so, telling Jesus, **“I’m ready to follow You, no matter what.”** But was He?

When our emotions get the best of us, we may seem willing, almost excited, but we might not fully understand what we are doing? Often, our commitment to whatever it is, are words spoken, motivated by a moment of excitement or emotions. His reply to this teacher of the law was, **“I don’t have a home, a roof over my head, or a warm place to sleep. I have nothing! Are you sure you want to follow me?”** Are you sure you are willing to pay that kind of cost?

In the Old Testament, there is a story of Ananias and Sapphira, do you remember what happened to them? *“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge, he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that **you have lied to the Holy Spirit** and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men, but to God.”*

(Do you want to know what happened next? Listen...)

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

*About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, **“Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”** “Yes,” she said, **“that is the price.”** Peter said to her, **“How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”** At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.” ACT 5:1-10*

The issue in this story with Ananias & Sapphira was not that Ananias or Sapphira kept some of the money from the sale of their property for themselves, it wasn’t wrong to sell their belongings, or to make a profit. The issue was, that they told the Lord one thing, and did another. They kept some of the money from the sale for themselves, thus, they lied to God and Peter. When we, make a promise to God, when we tell Him, this is what we will do, He waits for us to fulfill our decision so that He might bless us for being obedient.

When we promise something to the Lord, keeping in mind we are speaking to God, but do not follow through with what we told Him we would do, the end cost may be higher than we realize. We should always strive to do what we are telling the LORD we will do.

Thus not a speedy, unthought out commitment, rather a lasting commitment demonstrated by how we live our lives.

Second - Worldly distractions

"Another disciple came to Jesus and said to Him, Lord, first let me go bury my father. But Jesus told him, "Follow Me, let the dead bury the dead." (vv.21-22)

Here we find another disciple coming to Jesus, with a decision to follow Him, but.... Note, this man is not just another man, but a disciple, which means he has been and was known for following Jesus.

Most of know, that there are all kinds of important things to do in this world. We might even feel that some of the important things are of the highest priority.

•**You have to go to work!** Why? Because we need money, no money, no way to pay the bills.

The Lord knows that, that's why He gives us abilities and talents.

•**You have to go to the store?** Why? If you don't go shopping for food, what will you eat? Your family and your own life depend upon your ability to shop, to some degree. By the way, some of you are better at shopping than others.

•**Sometimes we may feel as though we have to watch a T.V. show at 7:00pm.** I have even heard a few say to themselves, *"if I don't watch this show, how will I make it through the week?"*

I have begun to realize, that this is part of the world's ploy to captivate us. To cause us to think we can't survive without these worldly trinkets. Each time another trinket is added to our repertoire, we are convinced, all that much more, that life without that item, is impossible. Thus, the world has, a greater and greater hold upon us, our actions, and causes us to think, we can't get by without ... ??? ... whatever it is.

I believe we have three constant enemies battling us for our souls every day. They are ***the world, the Devil and the flesh.***

•The world says ***"conform,"***

•The devil says, ***"Believe my lies,"*** and

•The flesh says, ***"Satisfy me."***

Perhaps this is why we are so easily conquered, like Goliath was. Sometimes we are so sure of ourselves, ***that we can deal with these things,*** that we can be easily defeated. ***The world is telling us*** to conform to what everyone is doing, fit in, be part of what is happening. ***The devil is trying to convince us,*** constantly whispering in our ear, believe me, believe me, I know what's best. ***The flesh, which is consumed by the "satisfy me" syndrome...*** tells us that we must have more, better, larger, more powerful, nicer than we have.

Worldly distraction can and are destroying us. Distracting us from paying more attention to God. Why? We have not counted the cost of these distractions as well as we should have.

The Lord is saying to us, ***"Don't get distracted."***

Third - Have you considered the cost?

"But Jesus told him, "Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead."

Jesus' words, particularly in verse 22, *"Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead,"* here and in other parts of the New Testament, can sound harsh to modern ears. That's at least partly due to the misconception that Jesus was soft, passive, and weak. This comment likely seemed harsh to those hearing Him for the first time, as well. A man described as a disciple has requested that Jesus allow him to go and bury his father before following Jesus (Matthew 8:21).

Jesus now commands the man to follow Him, apparently meaning immediately. He tells the man to ***"leave the dead to bury their own dead."***

Two things are important to understand.

First, the man most likely wasn't asking to simply go to his father's funeral and come back a few days later. It's possible his father was not yet even dead. Some commentators also suggest the man may have been planning to follow a custom of the day, to re-bury a loved one's bones a year after their death.

This was thought to be the responsibility of a son, especially a firstborn son. It fell under the traditional obligations associated with honoring one's father and mother. The man may have been asking Jesus for up to a year's delay, before returning to follow Him—no matter what, his real statement is ***"I will come when I've done some other things first."***

Second, Jesus wants us to understand that following Jesus would have a greater place within our commitments concerning our love and loyalty to Him, including parents, spouses, and children (Matthew 10:37–38).

Jesus tells the man to let ***the spiritually dead*** bury those who are ***physically dead***. In other words, ***only those who follow Christ are on the road to true life*** (Matthew 7:13–14). No human relationship, or other obligation, can provide a good enough reason to leave that road behind. To delay or stop following the Lord.

As with His response to the scribe (Matthew 8:19–20), Jesus' remark is meant to challenge assumptions—forcing someone to confront their own sincerity. If this man is not willing to "follow" Jesus ***until it's socially convenient***, he's not really willing to follow, at all.

When was the last time we sat down, spent time in prayer - quietly - and sought the Lord's direction? I don't mean telling Him what you want, seeking for or desire, I am speaking about His leading. When was the last time we made the prayerful decision to follow the Lord, knowing that, that decision meant we were going to have to work harder, do more, give whatever it takes to serve Him faithfully?

It is far too easy, for people to say ***"Yes"*** to the Lord, in their hearts, then it is to actually follow through with these commitments. It has, for many, become socially acceptable to include ***"church"*** as a part of our lives. However, having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, is something different all together.

We know we need Him, we may even know we want something more. We know what our parents, or family believe is the right thing to do, yet, are we at the place where we understand the depth of what it means to seek after Him for ourselves? Earnestly?

May I lay out, what I see, as part of the cost of following the Lord?

These may seem difficult at times right now, but I believe they are needed parts.

1) Pray for desire.... *I have mentioned this in the past, but it is so necessary.*

If we truly want to be His follower, then I believe it starts with prayer for that desire. Most of us need to start praying for desire to communicate with Him, worship and serve Him. Desire has to be at the core of our relationship. The ability to be steadfast, the willingness to apply what we read in His Word and use what God reveals to us daily, comes from that desire. **Pray for desire.**

2) Time to worship God.... Worship of God is at the core as well. According to Romans, is a decision to become **a living sacrifice**. This means, giving of ourselves to God, completely, to **the point of sacrifice**, not just **when it is convenient**. Make time to worship Him, in truth and Spirit. Sunday mornings become important – much more important after this.

3) Reading God's Word... Reading the Word is of vital importance, daily, regularly, consistently. If the only time we get into His Word is when we attend church, or, when we have the time, occasionally, to listen to others read it, we are not getting enough food. Let's be honest.... we must make time, regularly, or, we will not get into it. However, once it becomes a regular part of our spiritual life, we will seek for it.

4) Finding ways to give... When we get to this place of giving in our walk with the Lord, we simply can't do the bare minimum unto the Lord and find the strength we need. We are being called to give ourselves - SACRIFICIALLY unto Him. Seeking for ways to give the maximum we can. Not just for the church building or these meetings, rather, for our spiritual health. Ask Him what we should give and He will reveal it to us.

We live in a time when men are saying, **"That's mine, leave it alone!"** Claiming things as personal possessions, when in fact, they are not ours. We are living in a time when some feel they must dictate to God, what He can, or cannot do, rather than giving Him complete control over everything. Our tithes, offerings, talents and possessions are used as He desires. We should stop trying to control the Lord, and allow Him to control us, and all we have.

5) Sacrifice of personal expectations... Every one of us has something we want, expect, or demand in life. Thinking we need these things to make our lives better, yet, when we commit our lives unto the Master, our personal expectation may not be what He wants for us. Have we sat down and asked Him what He wants for us? We must let go of our personal wants, desires, expectations, and seek for what He wants.

Yet another cost of following Jesus is,

6) ***Abuse from those who are not committed to sacrifice...*** Whether it is abuse from those in the church, their language or actions, or, from those who do not know Him at all, I have heard and seen horrible things being said and done in the name of God, which are not of Him.

When we seek to live at this level of sacrifice for Him which we are talking about today, some people will be extremely critical, mocking, and even belittling us, for what we believe, and how we are trying to live. ***So what?*** Just expect it and allow the Lord to release any pain or displeasure because we are following Him!

So, let me end with this question:

“What costs are we willing to pay to follow Christ?”

If you don't know, start praying and discover what he wants for you and your family.

It is my opinion, that right now we need more than ever to get back to seeking the Lord whole heartedly.